



# The incorporation of market orientation in the school culture

## An essential aspect of school marketing

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to present the major features of market orientation (MO) and its benefits for schools, suggests an inventory to measure the degree of MO in a school, and provides strategies to incorporate elements of MO into the school culture.

**Design/methodology/approach** – An instructional, technical approach which is based on empirical literature both from business and service marketing and from the emergent research on educational marketing is taken in this article.

**Findings** – The paper analyzes the implications of MO for the management of school-environment relations, and provides an inventory to measure the degree of MO in individual schools. In addition, a stage by stage approach to incorporating MO into the school culture is broadly discussed, with a focus on the principal's key role in this process.

**Practical implications** – The paper concludes by suggesting some implications for future research on MO in schools and other educational institutions and highlights the significance of MO for our understanding of school marketing in the era of competition and choice.

**Originality/value** – As MO frequently underpins the development and implementation of successful organization-environment relationships, the current paper is a first attempt to help principals and administrators incorporate MO into their school, thereby capitalizing on the great advantages of market-oriented organizational cultures.

**Keywords** Market orientation, Education, Schools, Culture

**Paper type** General review

### Introduction

The research on school marketing has been receiving increasing attention in recent years as more and more researchers have illuminated marketing mechanisms within educational institutions, including schools, colleges and universities (e.g. Bagley *et al.*, 1996; Bell, 1999; Bunnell, 2005; Foskett, 2002; Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006; James and Phillips, 1995; Oplatka, 2002, 2004, 2006; Oplatka *et al.*, 2002).

A common finding across many studies worldwide points to the significant role of a relationship marketing approach (RM) in devising and implementing a marketing plan and strategy in schools (and other educational organizations). A RM approach puts emphasis on nurturing relationships, especially with existing customers, and the development of supportive market networks (Brown *et al.*, 1994). An underlying assumption is that attracting, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships is an



important determinant of the customer's overall satisfaction with a service. Forms of RM have been observed in schools worldwide (e.g. Bell, 1999; Oplatka *et al.*, 2002).

It is widely held that a RM approach begins with a commitment to marketing orientation (MO) and to developing an organizational culture that is customer-driven, and focuses on the quality of the service (Narver and Slater, 1990). MO frequently underpins the development and implementation of successful relationship marketing strategies in any organization (Helfert *et al.*, 2002). If a school can develop or improve its degree of MO, then it should also be able to achieve improved levels of RM. To the best of our knowledge, the literature on educational marketing has not paid sufficient attention to MO and explored its implications for schools.

This paper presents the major features of MO and its benefits for schools; suggests an inventory to measure the degree of MO in a school, and provides strategies to incorporate elements of MO into the school culture. It is based on current theory and research on MO in non-education sectors and on the research on educational marketing.

### **Market orientation: a key element in marketing the school**

Many managers today recognize that the ability to succeed in the marketplace requires more than just sales techniques – customers rarely respond to sales pitch, but rather they want their circumstances to be acknowledged and their needs to be satisfied. Successful marketing is now much more targeted, and the meeting of customers' needs is of high value. Hence, business and service organizations seek to achieve a competitive advantage in their dynamic environments, at least in part, by being market-driven, i.e. by anticipating, understanding and responding to the preferences and behaviors of customers (Jaworski *et al.*, 2000).

The marketing literature is replete with definitions and perspectives of MO, yet there is much agreement about the key concepts (Harris, 2002; Helfert *et al.*, 2002; Kohli *et al.*, 1993; Narver and Slater, 1990). At the core of this concept is the significance of customer orientation. Accordingly, customers' needs, desires and particular circumstances, e.g. lifestyles ought to be the main focus of the market-oriented organization. In this sense, MO is the degree to which an organization generates and uses intelligence about the current and future needs of customers; develops a strategy to satisfy these needs; and implements that strategy to meet those needs and wants.

MO takes into account the influence of competitors and incorporates inter-functional coordination. It encourages the generation of intelligence – or the use of data about competitors, and integrated cross-functional processes, in addition to the execution of a strategic organizational response to market opportunities. All these activities are directed towards creating and satisfying customers through continuous needs-assessment.

In the school context, we believe that a focus on current and prospective customers (parents, students) should take precedence over the two other functions of MO. In our view, MO is a set of beliefs that puts customers' interests first, but at the same time raises the school's awareness of the need to obtain information about competitors and establish cross-departmental activities to satisfy customers' needs, in order to gain a competitive edge in the turbulent, competitive environment.

*MO as an aspect of organizational culture*

MO appears also to be an aspect of organizational culture, where attention is focused on the values, attitudes and beliefs collectively held by an organization's members. For Narver and Slater (1990), one of the leading researchers of MO, this orientation is the part of the organizational culture that gives priority to profits and to providing good value to customers, whilst at the same time supporting the interests and further development of the organization.

But, MO as an element of the school culture extends beyond customer orientation. Based on the works of Narver and Slater, we suggest the following three related components of MO that are underpinned by shared values and beliefs, and that may help school administrators, managers and teachers to understand the school and its environment, and may also provide them with norms for behavior.

*Customer orientation.* School members are assumed to understand the school's target market thoroughly, and be capable of creating and providing superior value, over time. A teacher who subscribes to this approach in practice would collect information about the environment in which his/her students lived (e.g. lifestyle factors) changes teaching methods to accommodate students' particular needs, and would be attentive and responsive to parents' interests and points of view. Through this approach, it would then be possible to be more innovative and implement improvements for future students based on their anticipated needs.

*Competitor orientation.* School principals and teachers who aim to fully understand the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the capabilities and potential, of competing schools, seem to internalize this element of MO. Awareness of the importance of competitor activity and the monitoring of developments in competing schools can have a positive impact on decision-making, particularly through the development of new initiatives: additional services for parents and students.

*Inter-functional coordination.* The core belief which needs to be shared by all members of the school is that creating superior value for target customers is very significant for the success of a school in a competitive marketplace. This can only be achieved, however, through the integration and coordination of the school's resources. Attracting and sustaining student-customers should not be solely the responsibility of school management, but is the responsibility of everyone in the school community. School staff should have full access to information about the competition: the market environment, the community and so forth in order to achieve this.

The first two elements of the MO indicate a relative emphasis on collecting and processing information pertaining to customer preferences and competitor capabilities, respectively. The third element encompasses the coordinated and integrated application of organizational resources to synthesize and disseminate market intelligence, in order to put processes in place to build and maintain strong relationships with customers.

*The incorporation of MO: some benefits for schools*

There is some empirical evidence from commercial and service sector organizations for the positive impact of MO on organizations (e.g. Cervera *et al.*, 2001; Guo, 2002). The past research on MO found that it is positively correlated with innovation; business profitability; increased sales; high perceptions of service quality – excellence; employees' high levels of satisfaction and commitment; customers' satisfaction, and

brand loyalty. There is less conclusive evidence for the relationship between MO and performance, but some researchers claimed that MO improves outcomes for service organizations (e.g. Pulendran *et al.*, 2003).

In addition, it seems that a greater emphasis on customer orientation increases the introduction of new programs/initiatives, because customer orientation advocates a continuous, proactive approach toward meeting customers' exigencies. A focus on total customer satisfaction therefore, fosters continuous innovation for the benefit of existing and future customers.

### **A measure of market orientation in the school**

In light of several measures of MO suggested in the business literature (e.g., Hajjat, 2002; Harris, 2002; Helfert *et al.*, 2002; Kohli *et al.*, 1993), a measure of MO in schools which relies on reports of the perceptions of school staff is suggested here. Our aim is to provide school management with a means of measuring the degree of MO in their school, to provide a baseline assessment – crucial information that would be required if school management decided to enhance the dimension of MO in the school culture.

In our view, MO is a continuum rather than a dichotomous concept. It has three components: customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination. Based on this conceptualization, the MO Inventory is a 31-item measure of MO in a school and is presented here to be used by school management for identifying and measuring the extent to which the staff in the school behave in accordance with the principles of MO.

The first component of MO is “customer orientation” which comprises 20 items which measure the extent to which staff in the school (including: managers; middle managers; teachers; administrators etc.) focus on customers' needs, desires and concerns. These items are measured using a 6-point Stapel Scale (resulting in a possible total score ranging from – 60 to +60 on an interval scale) (see Table I).

Using a similar approach the perceptions of competitor schools, by members of the schools staff, can also be measured. “Competitor orientation”, the second component of MO, is often neglected in educational institutions, chiefly because educators sometimes perceive it to be incompatible with moral values of education (Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown, 2004). The next 7 items aim to measure the extent to which members of staff within the school are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of competitors and how far they believe that this information could contribute to the marketing of the school (scores range from – 21 to +21) (see Table II).

The final component of MO – “interfunctional coordination” within a school, also needs to be measured. Here, the behavioral expressions of inter-departmental coordination of marketing activities, as well as staff's beliefs about their responsibility for school marketing and customer orientation, are measured (scores range from – 21 to +21) (see Table III).

#### *How should the answers be analyzed?*

As the data gathered by the suggested measure are intended to assist principals in schools to grasp the extent by which their school is market-oriented, we propose a largely descriptive analysis of the data. Instead of using inferential statistics and seeking for mean scores or statistical correlations, the total scores, followed by the individual scores for each item can be used to support decisions based on these

Section A	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree		
My school understands the needs of children	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
My school cares about children's well being	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
My school responds to parents' requests effectively	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
My school meets, or goes beyond the promises it makes to parents	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
My school understands what kind of schooling parents value most	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Parents are given information that helps them in understanding the kind of schooling we have here	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Teachers in this school are eager to help children – and go beyond their role definition	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Complaints by parents and students are dealt with quickly	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
The complaints procedure is easy for parents and students to understand	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Teachers are regularly provided with information about parents' desires and views of schooling	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Teachers are attentive to students' concerns	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Our principal promotes the spirit of customer orientation and focus	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
We encourage parents to offer constructive positive comments	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
We encourage parents to offer constructive negative feedback	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
I feel committed to the school community	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
My school measures parents' satisfaction every school year	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
My school measures children's satisfaction every school year	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
A good teacher is the one whose students are happy and satisfied	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
In my school parents' views of education influence the schooling process	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Responding to parents' and children's needs is my major task	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Score	-60	-40	-20	20	40	60

**Table I.**  
The MO inventory:  
Section A

responses. For example, if most teachers gave a score of 3 (strongly agree) for the item – “My school understand the needs of children”, then, school management needs to analyze the reasons for that, sharing this activity with teachers for understanding teachers' interpretation of students' needs, for instance. The Inventory is also constructed in such a way, that it is possible to conduct the exercise as a whole group with staff and parents, and then to add up the scores for each respondent who completed the questionnaire. For example: each respondent will gain a score between +60 and –60 for Section A. The individual scores could be added together (taking into account negative scores) and by dividing by the number of respondents it is possible to produce an overall MO score for the school (see Table IV).

Section B	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree						Incorporation of market orientation
Teachers always look at what's going on in the other schools in the area	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
The principal often discusses the actions of other schools in our area	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Information about what my colleagues in other schools are doing does help me improve my teaching	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
My school usually responds to other schools' new initiatives/developments	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
My school understands the needs of students better than other local schools	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Our schools understands the needs of parents and students better than other schools in the area	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
My school compares favorably with other schools in the area	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Score	-21	-14	-7	7	14	21							<b>Table II.</b> The MO inventory: Section B

Section C	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree						Table III. The MO inventory: Section C
All departments contribute to school marketing	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Teachers cooperate to promote the school image	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Marketing should not be the sole responsibility of school management	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
In department meetings we discuss information about parents' demands and concerns in order to make improvements	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Marketing information is discussed and shared with teachers	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Teachers are not just paid to teach, they need to also help to attract prospective students	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
The guiding light in curriculum development or new initiatives is the demands of the parents and students	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3							
Score	-21	-14	-7	7	14	21							

Scores between 75-102	Very positive marketing orientation
Scores between 50-74	Positive marketing orientation
Score 25-49	Moderately positive marketing orientation. Check to see which areas need development
Score 0-24	Some minimal aspects of marketing orientation in place. Check to see which areas need development
Scores below 0	Negative MO. Need for a new long-term strategy to implement marketing orientation in all areas

**Note:** Total possible score 102

**Table IV.**  
Scoring the MO inventory

For example: and overall score of between 40 and 60 for Section A would be very positive indeed, whereas an overall score below zero might provide the impetus to look at changes.

After calculating the frequencies of each item, the underlying issues could be discussed with a sample of teachers (or parents) to probe into the meaning and the implications for the school. Such a measure is only valuable when it stimulates discussion, rather than for its own sake.

### **Incorporating market orientation into the school culture**

One approach to linking MO as a philosophy to more practical issues is to look at it as an aspect of organizational culture. Culture refers to the collection of deep-seated, unwritten system of shared values, attitudes, beliefs, ways of thinking, artifacts and norms within a school, which dictate its policies and practices (Kluchhon, 1951). Further, organizational culture usually involves the goals of the school, the preferred means to reach the goals, and a set of principles which maintain the identity and integrity of the school. A marketing culture is one in which the philosophical principles of MO rule, in policy and in practice. In other words, this culture reflects an enthusiastic service orientation, high awareness to competition, and acceptance of inter-functional coordination.

Homburg and Pflessner (2000) conceptualize market oriented organizational culture as a construct including four components. We describe here the first three of them and match them to the school culture:

- (1) Organization-wide shared basic values supporting MO. At the core of the market oriented school culture is the emphasis given to customer service (process oriented) rather than to academic achievements (results oriented) exclusively.

A shared set of beliefs and values in market-oriented school centers around organizational pride, customer service, service quality, innovation, open-minded, sense of mission, entrepreneurship, outperforming competition, striving for excellence. In particular, schools sharing the values of an open internal communication are more likely to be market-oriented, because market information is not kept by the school management but is disseminated across the school.

- (2) Organization-wide norms for MO that provide links between the value-level and the practice one could be the extension of services on offer; decentralized decision making which enables fast market oriented processes; coordination of inter-departmental activities, or inter-departmental implementation of innovations, which is the key for adding value for customers.

A cultural value of openness goes along with knowing the customer well, doing what is necessary for accomplishing the organization's customer friendliness and service, learning from mistakes made, being attentive to complaints and considering one's own work as important in accomplishing the school's service.

- (3) The market-oriented culture is embedded with perceptible artifacts that promote the MO among school staff. For example, stories about exceptional behaviors of a teacher with a strong service commitment, welcoming reception area, special events for parents at key points in the calendar, or regular awards

for customer-oriented teachers. The language used in the staff room of market-oriented schools includes sentences and words such as: “in our school we do care for the well-being of students”, “satisfied parents promote learning and school image”, or “we are attentive to the personal distress of students” (Oplatka *et al.*, 2002).

### *Designing an effective approach to cultural change*

We assume that organizational culture can be managed and, therefore, changed. The program for changing the school culture to accommodate MO is built piece by piece, using the design parameters described below as a guide. Our suggestions for cultural change in schools are based on the work of Bate (1994), who constructed a five-phase model of the cultural development process. This process is based on a dialogue rather than hierarchy for making changes to organizational culture. In this sense, we find it more appropriate for schools as well as to the principles underlying MO discussed above.

#### *First phase: deformative*

In the first phase a school management should deliberately deliver some kind of shock to the system that will trigger the beginning of a cultural change process. For example, school staff might be informed of future decline in enrolment of the following intake; the emergence of a magnet school in the area; or budgetary cutbacks. Research findings indicate that the more turbulent the market is, the quicker an organization's market oriented behavior will be. In addition, it is likely that the higher the degree of competitive intensity, the quicker a company's market orientation will be.

However, teachers and other school staff have become very used to working in what Carlson named “domestic organization”, which means that schools operate in a certain and stable environment (Carlson, 1965). Put differently, teachers worldwide are highly resistant to adopting values of competition (Oplatka, 2006; Oplatka *et al.*, 2002); therefore, it is very hard to undermine their current value system. For example, many times during interviews with teachers they have flatly claimed that education is incompatible with marketing”, that “teachers are paid merely for teaching, not for marketing their schools”, or that “teachers as professionals know what kids need” (Oplatka *et al.*, 2002). In situations where the cultural scripts are strongly shared by school members and it is hard to undermine their control, Bate (1994) suggests using the “shock” strategy.

The use of shock tactics may sound for some educators somewhat unethical and inappropriate for education, but it is rooted in the belief that if one waits for people to initiate cultural change voluntarily, one may have to wait forever. Most people, including teachers, prefer things to stay as they are, even if this is to their cost in the long term. Our own research shows that many teachers adhere to conservative values that are in accordance with the stable, non-competitive environment of schools for many years (e.g., there is no need to market the school, good teaching is enough for attracting prospective students), even in schools that face considerable a slump in enrolment. Bate (1994, p. 220) explains what the “shock” might cause to teachers in this kind of school:

A mode of thought is created which can no longer be accommodated comfortably within existing orthodox forms, and whose very presence now produces the tension or dialectic for a process of second-order, frame-breaking innovation to occur.



Thus, as public schools are facing turbulent, complex and constantly changing environments (e.g., consumerism, privatization, and inter-school competition for the provision of schooling), it is likely that the awareness of this environmental turbulence by many teachers will lead them to question their long-held beliefs and views of schools, schooling and the local community. School management needs to encourage teachers and school staff to reflect upon their role and upon the school in which they work, to analyze the new situation, and to undermine the common sense of “pupils will always enroll at the school” that has prevailed the school for many years.

*Second phase: reconciliative*

All that has happened so far as a result of phase one is that an attack has been mounted on the traditional school culture and a new set of ideas in favor of marketing has been presented. Inevitably, the forces of resistance have begun to muster, and some teachers might oppose the “new spirit” of marketing actively or passively. For example, they might refrain from being involved in any marketing-like activities held by the school, or protest in publicly against any attempt on behalf of school management to urge teachers to adopt a customer orientation.

The potential resistance coupled with Bate’s (1994) assertion that cultural change cannot be created by the management and be imposed on employees in a top-down fashion, make it imperative to give the new ideas of market-orientation social form and to harness as many teachers as possible to believe in the necessity and benefit of this orientation. Specific goals in this phase are convincing teachers of the value of customer service, and in fostering positive teacher attitudes toward service quality, purposes that need to be achieved through interactive dialogue, participation and the involvement of the school staff. The understanding, beliefs and commitment to MO by teachers at every level is the first step for developing MO behavior.

Hence, the principal should not impose his or her perspective, because no position or group is privileged within the school culture. How should school management, then, promote a market-oriented culture in school at this stage? What are the factors affecting this process?

The purpose during this phase is not to help school staff come to terms with the proposed cultural change but to let them participate in the making of those terms – widening rather than narrowing the possible options open to them, and negotiating with each other the potential values and norms appropriate to transforming the school culture into a market-oriented one. The principal, or any other school administrator who leads this kind of “negotiation”, needs to have the skills to tackle the many tasks that face them. These include: creating a climate for argument and debate about the evolution of market-orientation; taking account of alternative and oppositional positions for the competitive view; and coordinating the heterogeneous participants from different departments. Further, a generalized discussion about the implications of the competition and consumer satisfaction levels for the schooling process as well as a debate about the community’s needs in the future is warranted during these informally organized meetings.

But, school management ought to be aware of the potential determinants and barriers to the incorporation of MO within an organization so as to utilize them fully in their meetings with the staff. Among these external influences are:

- Senior management factors, i.e. the extent to which the principal or the assistant principal are themselves convinced of the value of MO, and how actively they communicate this commitment to teachers.
- Inter-departmental relations, i.e. the degree of conflict or cooperation between different departments within the school. Barriers derived from conflicts are likely to impede the flow of information around the school and inhibit coordinated responses to it. Building a market-oriented organization necessitates the involvement of everyone in the organization across professional boundaries. Thus, team working is likely to positively assist inter-departmental coordination and information dissemination, and is also useful as a means of educating various departmental teachers on the importance of MO.
- Organizational systems, i.e. the potential for the reward systems to foster service quality and relationship instead of volumes or achievements. The next phase includes several examples of strategies to utilize reward systems to enhance the dimension of market-orientation in the school culture.

The target of this phase should be the emergence of an agreed-upon culture, i.e. of common interpretation of the reality. Yet, one should take into account the principles of market-oriented culture discussed above and find the proper ways to combine them in the informal meetings with school staff. The subjectively constructed culture is a consequence of particular school features and basic elements of MO.

#### *Third phase: acculturative*

In this phase we have to clarify and consolidate what has emerged in the reconciliative phase, and to allow teachers to think about the new cultural meanings of MO in a more practical sense. Teachers should translate the values underlying the MO into their day-to-day work. In other words, they move now to express strong commitment towards the market-oriented cultural scripts in their school.

In this phase, then, we suggest using several practical tools and strategies for enabling teachers to internalized the elements of MO and encourage them to function accordingly. School administrators must constantly work to build a consensus on the core values and to ensure teachers view reality in similar ways. They need to manage meaning in such a way that teachers orient themselves to the achievement of desirable goals, using language, ritual, stories, myths, and symbolic construction of all kinds.

There are various forms of symbols to achieving MO and integrated effort in school. Dandridge (1982, p. 71) pointed out the:

Symbols carry us beneath the objective surface of organizational life, into the underlying value structure and feelings inherently there. A symbol elicits or directs individual members' feelings or values. To the extent that any element of organizational life functions in this way it acts as a symbol.

Therefore, school administrators may use symbols to increase the dimension of MO in the school culture. Among these symbols are language, stories, ceremonies and physical symbols.

*Language.* A school's vision statement epitomizes the use of language to set a tone, provide direction and gain commitment from teachers for MO. School management must actively spread the vision of MO to teachers and must reinforce the vision with

consistent actions every day. For example, teachers should be provided with information about community's needs, and the principal has to carefully listen to teachers and make changes when s/he hears a good idea.

Above all, however, school management should involve teachers in devising customer service guidelines that explicate the operational details that have to be followed in implementing the plan for formal customer service. The guiding may prescribe the "minimum standard" of service expected in dealing with customers. It is likely that written guidelines will have a greater effect in formalizing the behaviors and modes of operation of teachers than it does for management behavior, because it has a direct effect on customer-teacher relations. In market-oriented schools, for instance, teachers are expected to carry a plastic card which summarizes the ten points which remind them how to deal with parents and students: smile, make eye contact, listen to complaints, and the like.

*Stories.* Stories are usually based on true events that occurred in the school's past and are repeated to new teachers to help them understand the school. For example, principals could tell novice teachers about exceptional teachers, who devoted much of their time voluntarily to help students in academic or personal difficulties. This kind of stories stresses the values of the market-oriented school culture.

*Ceremonies.* Ceremonies are usually elaborately planned events for large audiences held on special occasions that reinforce specific values and create a bond among employees for sharing a mutual understanding. In a market-oriented school culture, it is suggested that "the teacher of the month competition" might be organized where teachers nominate colleagues who have demonstrated a high degree of service orientation. It is worth noting, that without proper organizational reinforcement, a market-oriented culture is inadequate as a means of ensuring the implementation of marketing.

*Physical symbols.* There is a great benefit from using physical symbols to transmit the spirit of MO to the staff. For example, designing schools with modern and pleasing architecture and layout on green sites, may contribute to an atmosphere of service. In addition, posters at all entrances which indicate the school's commitment to serving its customers effectively "remind" teachers of their service orientation. Slogans stressing the competitive advantages of the school may represent a MO. Teacher recognition of these symbols is a powerful tool for creating a market-oriented culture.

The intention is that teachers leave this phase with a framework of personal commitments and obligations which they themselves helped to create and around which they feel a sense of ownership.

#### *Fourth phase: enactive*

In this phase the teachers have reached the critical moment when they must translate words into deeds and put to the test their ability to discharge their personal obligations and to achieve effective concerted market-oriented action. In this phase teachers should become servants rather than merely instructors. A service provider who has accepted these goals should strive to meet them and is likely to achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction. In contrast, a teacher who does not either understand or accept the service quality levels is unlikely to achieve them and thereby is likely to bring about customer dissatisfaction.

This is the time for formal training. There is a need for a well-organized socialization and learning process, and training programs for all teachers – because every teacher has an impact on the experiences of customers. The training should not be based on a top-down message and knowledge transmission, but rather on interactive exchanges of actual ways and strategies to make the service more effective. Teachers need to discuss potentially effective ways to increase customer orientation in a school, respond to competitors' initiatives and coordinate with each other in attracting and retaining students.

#### *Fifth phase: formative*

In the last phase, the new culture should be structured and created to transform the school. The organizational design of the school will be changing. The MO is institutionalized and stabilized in the school.

#### *The principal: a critical role in the incorporation of MO in schools*

Principal's leadership style plays a key role in influencing the process of MO development. Developing a MO is a complex and arduous process, and principals have a major role in the changing of the school culture. Past research has emphasized the following leadership styles that contribute, by and large, to the incorporation of MO in an organization (e.g., Harris and Ogbonna, 2001; Kasper, 2002):

- Participative and supportive leadership style is strongly linked to MO whilst an instrumental leadership style is negatively linked to this orientation. This kind of style provides an appropriate environment in which market-oriented cultural change may be possible, due to the involvement of teachers and other school members in this process, as we have indicated above.
- The principal has the important role of being a role model in the development and change of the organizational culture. He or she must transmit a vision of service to teachers and encourage them to embrace a unified vision that not only addresses existing consumers' needs and desires but is also likely to reveal new ones. In many cases only when the principal demonstrates the importance of a commitment towards the satisfaction of consumer needs will the rest of the school staff come to share that orientation.
- Intellectual stimulation from the leader encourages followers to reexamine assumptions about their work and to find creative ways for improving their performance: a precondition for embarking on the process of cultural change. Furthermore, principals have a primary role in creating an organizational culture that encourages innovation and creativity – which are integral elements of the MO development.
- The principal is responsible for selecting teachers that are service oriented in the recruitment process. Among the characteristics of these teachers is an ability to empathize, sensitivity to social problems, strong emotional commitment towards pupils, a belief in the caring aspect of teaching and so forth.

In sum, leadership is a necessary condition for a transition towards MO. Research findings indicate that behavior by a principal that is formalized, conflictual or politically motivated is negatively associated with the extent of MO.

### Conclusion

This paper sets the stage for studying the aspects of MO in schools and related educational institutions and for suggesting practical strategies to incorporate MO culture in this sort of organization. While school management has been encouraged to adopt MO and change the school culture accordingly, researchers in the field of educational management will find MO a useful concept for increasing our understanding of school-environment relationships, on one hand, and of cultural aspects of the school organization, on the other.

Subsequent research on MO in educational institution should begin with an enquiry of the degree of MO in schools, colleges and universities, as well as the particular antecedence and consequences of MO in this kind of organization. There is a great need for research which explores the influence of school principals and college managers on the incorporation of MO in these institutions, and teachers' responses to the principal's attempts in this respect.

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